

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 602

December 13, 1995, 10:21 p.m.
Page S-18515 Temp. Record

DISAPPROVING BOSNIA DEPLOYMENT, SUPPORTING TROOPS/Rejection

SUBJECT: A resolution expressing Congress' support for United States Armed Forces and opposition to President Clinton's planned deployment of United States ground forces to Bosnia . . . S. Con Res. 35. Passage.

ACTION: CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REJECTED, 47-52

SYNOPSIS: S. Con. Res. 35 will resolve the following: "Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, Section 1. That the Congress opposes President Clinton's decision to deploy United States ground forces into the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its associated annexes. Section 2. That the Congress strongly supports the U.S. Armed Forces who may be ordered by the President to implement the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its associated annexes."

Those favoring the amendment contended:

Sending ground forces to Bosnia is a huge mistake. Congress must make it clear in no uncertain terms that President Clinton should not have made this unilateral decision, and must urge that it not be implemented, but at the same time it must make very clear that this time, United States troops will not be endangered by political games. Though we disapprove of the mission, we will do everything we can to ensure the safety of our troops.

Our conviction that President Clinton's unilateral decision to put troops in harm's way in Bosnia is a huge mistake rests on three broad arguments. First, and above all, the conflict in Bosnia poses no real threat to vital American interests. No compelling reason exists for sending American troops into the middle of this war, with the near certitude that some of them will die. Second, the Dayton talks have produced a false peace that is inherently unstable and politically doomed. Finally, the implementation force (IFOR) has self-contradictory goals and hopelessly optimistic goals that will expose our soldiers to unreasonable risks as they try to achieve the fantasy goals of the Dayton peace plan. We pray that we are wrong, and it may well be that prayer is the only way this mission is

(See other side)

YEAS (47)			NAYS (52)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (46 or 87%)	Democrats (1 or 2%)		Republicans (7 or 13%)	Democrats (45 or 98%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Hatfield	Feingold	Chafee	Akaka	Inouye		
Ashcroft	Helms		DeWine	Baucus	Johnston		
Bennett	Hutchison		Jeffords	Biden	Kennedy		
Bond	Inhofe		Kassebaum	Bingaman	Kerrey		
Brown	Kempthorne		Lugar	Boxer	Kerry		
Burns	Kyl		McCain	Bradley	Kohl		
Campbell	Lott		Roth	Breaux	Lautenberg		
Coats	Mack			Bryan	Leahy		
Cochran	McConnell			Bumpers	Levin		
Cohen	Murkowski			Byrd	Lieberman		
Coverdell	Nickles			Conrad	Mikulski		
Craig	Pressler			Daschle	Moseley-Braun		
D'Amato	Santorum			Dodd	Moynihan		
Dole	Shelby			Dorgan	Murray		
Domenici	Simpson			Exon	Nunn		
Faircloth	Smith			Feinstein	Pell		
Frist	Snowe			Ford	Pryor		
Gorton	Specter			Glenn	Reid		
Gramm	Stevens			Graham	Robb		
Grams	Thomas			Harkin	Rockefeller		
Grassley	Thompson			Heflin	Sarbanes		
Gregg	Thurmond			Hollings	Simon		
Hatch	Warner				Wellstone		

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:

AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

going to succeed.

The Clinton Administration has repeatedly argued that two vital United States' interests are at stake in the conflict in Bosnia. First, it has argued that if the United States does not intervene now, the war will widen to a point where it will threaten all of Europe, and keeping all of Europe out of war is clearly in the United States' interest. However, the war, which has often been little more than genocidal slaughter by the Bosnian Serbs of Bosnian Moslems and Croats, has been going on now for several years. For more than a year it has been of fairly low intensity. Basically, the Serbians have conquered most of the Bosnian territory that has large Serbian majorities, and they have sat on their gains. During the past year the conflict has not spread--it has subsided--and there is no indication that it is about to start moving into neighboring territories. We are by no means saying that it is about to stop anytime soon, but neither is it about to move into the heart of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Western Europe.

Second, the Clinton Administration has argued that if the United States does not lead NATO in intervention, then both the NATO alliance and United States' leadership will be at risk. We disagree--if NATO and United States' leadership in the world will dissolve as a result of the United States refusing to lead this foolhardy mission, then both NATO and the United States are in serious trouble, all issues related to Bosnia aside. NATO, was, and we believe still is, a defensive alliance. It was formed to resist Soviet hegemony in particular, and to keep peace in Western Europe in general. The particular reason has dissolved, but the general principle remains. We are not isolationists--we recognize that the United States' fortune is closely linked to that of Western Europe's, as two devastating World Wars this century have shown. Therefore, we do not lightly dismiss any charge that a policy we favor may harm NATO. We carefully considered the President's claim that not leading a NATO effort in Bosnia would do irreparable harm to the alliance.

Our conclusion was that he was wrong. Bosnia is not at the heart of Europe, as so many Senators have falsely asserted--it is at the fringe. The vicious, genocidal bloodshed between Croats, Serbs, and Bosnian Moslems has been going on for over 800 years without causing wars in Western Europe. We know that the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Bosnia triggered World War I, but it did not cause it--it was the initial excuse. Europe had been at peace for decades, and political lines had not been adjusted to fit new power realities. The same is not true now. If NATO has so little cohesion after the collapse of the Soviet Union that its very existence will be threatened if the United States does not join it in this fight, which poses no immediate threat to Europe, then it has little chance of surviving no matter what the United States does. If so, it will mean that NATO's initial purpose no longer exists, and without this new purpose of being the world's policeman it may as well disband. We do not deny that Western Europe favors an approach in Bosnia of direct intervention, but we also do not think that NATO's true purpose of defending Western Europe has lost its currency among any of NATO's members. Though Europeans may be disappointed if the United States does not send ground troops to Bosnia, whether it sends them to participate in this European side show or not will not determine NATO's fate. In fact, we think that participation in this war will harm NATO. U.S. support, as well as European support, for this organization may well dwindle if casualties begin to mount in Bosnia.

The related claim is that United States' leadership in the world will be seriously weakened if Congress disapproves of this presidential commitment that was made to other countries. If true, this claim is a sad commentary on the pathetic state of United States leadership. Only a few years ago the United States put together a huge, multinational coalition to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. Today, we are told that American leadership depends on adhering to President Clinton's promise to follow the bidding of Europeans in Bosnia; we are told, in essence, that we must sacrifice American lives by following Europe's lead if we are going to remain the "leader" of the free world. As we see it, agreeing to fight in Bosnia is not leadership, it is followship, and it is followship of a policy that is not in the United States' interests. Making a bad decision to go along with the wishes of other countries is not going to increase America's stature in the world. This mission is doomed to fail--do our colleagues think that in hindsight, Europeans will say that Americans were strong leaders by supporting a policy they knew was bad just because Europeans thought it was good? Perhaps in the short-term opposing this deployment may not be liked by our allies, but in the long-run it is the best decision.

To appreciate the folly of President Clinton's decision one must first appreciate the basis of the conflict. For 800 years, Catholic Croatian Bosnians, Serbian Orthodox Bosnians, and Moslem Bosnians have ruthlessly slaughtered each other in this rugged, mountainous country. No clear boundary lines divide the three; in some areas, one or another group predominates, but pockets of all three groups are scattered throughout Bosnia. Though the conflict appears to be divided on religious lines, the disputes are not doctrinal, but are instead more along the lines of centuries-old blood feuds. The behavior, appearance, and culture of the three groups are indistinguishable; they also share in common that they can each recite the dates and locations of battles going back hundreds of years that their respective sides lost, and that they are determined to avenge.

The current conflict started at the end of the Bush Administration. Europeans, knowing the history of warfare in this region and fearing that war would ignite among the states of the former Yugoslavia, prevailed upon the United Nations to impose an arms embargo on Yugoslavia in an attempt to keep arms out of the region and thus to mute and contain any wars that occurred. The embargo was imposed before Bosnia seceded from Yugoslavia. When Bosnia seceded, the Secretary General of the United Nations took it upon himself to declare that the embargo applied to Bosnia. This decision was supported by our European allies, and President Bush went along with the decision. However, imposing the embargo on Bosnia did not discourage war; it encouraged it. When Yugoslavia broke into separate nations Serbia ended up with most of its military and its military industrial base. It alone had arms and troops, and it had a lot of them. With a world ban on weapons going to the new state of Bosnia, Serbia took advantage of the situation by launching a war against the new country, which it largely conducted with proxy ethnic-Serbian Bosnians.

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From the beginning, many Members on both sides of the aisle have opposed the world's policy of supporting this embargo, which has denied arms to an unarmed country that has been under attack from a heavily armed neighbor. As the war has continued over the years, it has become horrifically vicious. Serbians have engaged in a policy of "ethnic cleansing" of regions they have conquered. They have executed thousands of unarmed noncombatant men and boys, and, to instill terror, they have set up camps where they rape women and they have directed their snipers to target children. In a nation of 5 million people 2 million are now refugees. The Moslems have suffered the most (the ethnic Croats receive some protection from Croatia, which has become more powerful militarily in the past couple of years)--in the course of this one-sided war more than 200,000 Bosnian Moslems have been killed.

The world's response has been to impose an economic embargo (which has been ineffectual because of Serbia's porous borders with sympathetic neighboring countries) and to send "peacekeepers." The 40,000 United Nations peacekeepers have engaged in endless negotiations with the warring parties, and have seen a couple of dozen cease-fires and peace agreements reached and broken in the past few years. They have also watched helplessly as Moslem ghettos within Serbian territory called "safe havens" that they were supposed to be protecting have been overrun by Serbians, and many of the lightly armed peacekeepers have been killed or used as human shields. At present, nearly all of the peacekeepers have been drawn back behind Moslem defenses for their own protection. Over the past couple of years, the United Nations has done little more than supervise the slaughter.

NATO has done a little more, though certainly not much. Until recently, it did little more than fly a few pin-prick bombing attacks, and then only if it received U.N. approval. Pressure from Congress finally led to more severe bombing, which some of our colleagues credit with convincing Serbia to agree to negotiate the Dayton accords. It is on the basis of those accords, which have yet to be signed, that President Clinton ordered the deployment of ground troops to Bosnia.

When President Clinton was running for office he said he would support the policy being pushed by many Members of Congress to lift the embargo and engage in air strikes to help Bosnia until it was adequately armed to defend itself. He not only has not kept that promise, he has done everything he can to undermine it, even as support for the lift-and-strike policy has gained ever more support in Congress. Earlier this year, by more than two-thirds majorities in both Houses, Congress voted to lift the embargo, unilaterally if necessary. President Clinton vetoed that bill, and immediately stepped up actions in Bosnia in an attempt to broker a settlement.

Those actions resulted in the Dayton accords. The Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian governments negotiated the settlement. The main Croatian militia in Bosnia, and the main Serbian militia in Bosnia had representatives at the talks, but they did not agree to the settlement. Serbia and Croatia are not main combatants in the war--they provide support to the militias. Thus, only two of the three main warring parties negotiated and have said they will sign this settlement. In addition to the three main warring parties, there are at least nine rogue military forces that are fighting in Bosnia. None of these forces is party to the agreement either, and most of the earlier peace agreements broke down following actions by these rogue forces.

What exactly the Dayton accords require of the United States is unclear, and the contradictory statements from the Administration have not helped matters any. Back in 1993, the Administration said that before troops were sent to Bosnia, four criteria would have to be met: the goal must be clearly stated; there must be strong likelihood of success; there must be an exit strategy; and there must be sustained public support. The last of these criteria has been clearly abandoned; a strong majority of the American people oppose this deployment. The first three criteria also have not been met. What exactly is the United States goal in Bosnia? At times, the Administration has suggested that the United States will simply separate the warring parties for 1 year (though still allowing free travel by people across the dividing line) and then it will leave. Secretary Christopher, for example, said on December 1: "Let me assure you that IFOR's mission is well-defined and limited. Our troops will enforce the military aspects of the agreement. They will not be asked to guarantee the success of democracy or reconstruction." At other times, though, the Administration has said our goal is much broader. For example, Assistant Secretary Holbrooke, who negotiated the accord, said that we will only achieve success if we create a single, unitary, multiethnic Bosnian state, "Otherwise, we will have failed." Also, the mission may or may not be to arm the Bosnian forces. Secretary Christopher has said: "We are committed to achieve the stable military balance with Bosnia and among the states of the former Yugoslavia." He also said: "The Armed Forces in the Federation (of Bosnia) will need to obtain some equipment and training in order to establish an effective self-defense capability. As for our part, the United States will ensure that the Federation Armed Forces receive the necessary assistance." However, the Administration has also agreed that the arms build-up will not occur until there is first success in pursuing an arms build-down. What happens if warring parties refuse to turn over their weapons? Is it less of a "military aspect" to take away arms than it is to provide them? Going beyond whether we will arm the Bosnians, and perhaps try to disarm other factions, we note that article 6, section 3 of the accords, which was included at U.S. insistence, provides that: "Our NATO forces will have the authority to: A. Help secure conditions for the conduct of free and fair elections; B. Assist in the accomplishment of humanitarian missions; C. Assist the U.N. High Commission for Refugees; and D. Prevent interference with the movement of civilian populations and to respond to deliberate violence to life and person."

This authority sounds a lot like mission creep to us. We are not sending peacekeepers to monitor a peace that the warring parties want; we are sending heavily armed troops to enforce a reluctant peace that has little support among the combatants. The United States has insisted on having carte blanche authority to engage in virtually any type of nation-building activity imaginable in Bosnia--this authority is not consistent with having a limited, defined goal. Our troops will be in great danger if we allow their mission to expand to these activities. For instance, we expect assisting in efforts to return refugees to their homes (the accords provide

that they have a right to return) will meet with a great deal of resistance from the new occupants of those homes. Similarly, providing for free and fair elections will almost inevitably make the United States appear to be taking sides, because one side or another will always feel that the elections are being set up to hurt its interests. The United States, of course, will not be seen as being neutral to begin with, because it has very recently been conducting a bombing campaign against the Serbians. The accords are already being violated. The Croatian militia, for instance, has burned several towns that it is required to give up, and one war criminal whom the accords requires to be turned over to the War Crimes Tribunal has instead been released. How are the United States and other NATO forces to respond to these events?

One of the most disturbing parts of the Dayton accords is that they set up a structure for a government that is repugnant to American principles and that we think has no chance of lasting. The accords draw a line through the middle of the country, with Moslems and Croats on one side (they have been in an uneasy alliance the past year in order to fight the stronger Serbians) and the Serbians on the other. The "democracy" that will be created will have a rotating presidency based on ethnicity. America condemns ethnic discrimination, but in this case it helped negotiate the creation of a state that is founded upon it. Further, a bifurcated country is not sustainable. Issues of sovereignty and ethnic self-determination are not even addressed in the accords. When similar structures have been attempted in the past, such as in Cyprus, the result has been dismal failure. We see no reason to expect a different result in this instance.

Making matters even worse, it is very difficult to fight a war in Bosnia. The terrain is extremely rugged, and is perfectly suited for guerilla warfare. President Clinton blustered that any attack against U.S. troops would be responded to with overwhelming force. Suppose a mortar or sniper shot is fired on our troops from a mountaintop or town; will we fruitlessly bombard the mountain? Will we attack the town and kill civilians? Many areas of the country are inaccessible to any vehicles, and only one bridge in the country can support the weight of a tank. How are we to fight in such redoubts? Further, this force we are sending, counting our allies' troops, will number only 60,000. There are 250,000 troops within the three main factions in Bosnia, more in the rogue elements, and more than 750,000 in Croatia and Serbia. One recent estimate we saw in Defense News said that this mission will require 240,000 NATO troops to succeed. Hitler committed 400,000 troops to contain Yugoslavia, but he never totally pacified it, even with his ruthless tactics. The Defense News estimate may be optimistic.

Without a clear goal, it is impossible to have either a strong chance of succeeding or a clear exit strategy. The Clinton Administration has said that its exit strategy is to leave within 12 months, or earlier if the peace agreement breaks down. That is a timetable, not a strategy, and it is utterly inconsistent with the claim that we are defending vital interests. If it is in our vital interests to stop this war from spreading, an increase in the fighting will increase the risk of it spreading and only increase our interest in stopping it. Instead, the Clinton Administration says that if the factions decide to fight again, then it is no longer in our interest to be in the middle and we should leave. One United Nations General in Bosnia estimated that the United States would lose more people in Bosnia than it did in the Persian Gulf War, where it lost 390. We asked Secretary Christopher, Secretary Perry, and General Shalikashvili if they thought this mission was worth 400 American lives--all replied yes. However, it is not worth staying more than 1 year. All the troops must be out, absolutely regardless of the situation, within 1 year. Everyone still alive will be home before the next election. Win lose or draw, we will be out. Our vital interests are important enough to the Clinton Administration to sacrifice the lives of hundreds of American soldiers, but they are only important enough to defend for 1 year.

Congress has a duty to oppose this mission. Many of us think that we should stop it in its infancy by cutting off funds (see vote No. 601); others of us believe that it would be a mistake for Congress to stop funding now, especially because some troops have already arrived. We have debated the constitutional arguments many times in the past, and Senators who support this resolution are on both sides of the question as to whether the President had the authority to order this deployment. We agree, though, that this decision as a policy matter is horrendous. Some Senators believe that whatever our feelings we should say we support the mission as a way of supporting our troops. They worry both about the morale of our troops and the encouragement we may give the enemies they will face. Both worries are misplaced. On the first, we do not believe that we will be doing our troops any favor by lying to them. Saying that this mission is in the United States interests, is well defined, and is achievable will not increase morale. They are not children--they read papers, they watch the news, and they know the situation in Bosnia, the mood in the country, and the mood in Congress. Any lie in favor of this mission will be transparent.

The other argument, that voting against this mission will make it more dangerous by encouraging our enemies, is more serious. We have therefore served notice in this resolution that despite our disagreement with this deployment we will do everything possible to support our troops. We will not try to run the war, or in any way to restrict our troops on their mission. We will not allow political decisions to put our troops' lives in danger. We learned the folly of letting politicians run wars in Vietnam. Important targets were put off-limits for political reasons, and our military was not allowed to prosecute that war to win or to ensure the safety of our troops. That lesson was reinforced in Somalia, where 18 Rangers were killed in battle after running out of ammunition. They would not have run out of ammunition if reinforcements could have reached them, but they could not because those reinforcements had been denied armored personnel carriers by the Clinton Administration for political reasons. Similarly, we do not want any more pilots like O'Grady shot down in Bosnia because the Clinton Administration would not target the Serbian radar and missile sites that it knew posed a threat to American pilots. Further, we have seen how it is easy for some Members to pay lip-service to providing for our troops, and at the same time to cut funding for training, procurement, and operation and maintenance accounts. The truth is that the

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test of resolve will be found in actions, not words; no one will doubt America's willingness to support its troops when those troops are supported, just as promises to support troops are not believed when those promises are broken.

It is now winter in Bosnia. Each winter, the war has entered a lull. When spring has arrived, the killing has resumed. We fear the killing will resume this year as well. If so, Americans will be among those killed. We should do what we can to stop this tragedy before it occurs. We know that many Senators in good conscience believe that it is necessary to support this mission now that the decision has been made, but we disagree. We support our troops, but President Clinton should not have sent them to Bosnia.

Those opposing the resolution contended:

Argument 1:

Today the President of the United States will leave for Paris to participate in a historic event, the signing of an agreement that will open the door to peace in the Balkans. After years of savage, genocidal warfare based on religion, peace is about to come to Bosnia. At the turn of the century, conflict was allowed to rage unchecked in Bosnia, and that conflict spread to engulf all of Europe and then the whole world in World War I. World War II grew out of the political settlements of that war. For the 40 years of the Cold War the national and ethnic tensions that led to those wars were put aside, but they have begun to emerge again, nowhere more notably than in Bosnia, where ethnic-religious wars have raged for hundreds of years.

For the past several years, we have joined our colleagues in deploring the unjust, and internationally illegal, policy of enforcing an arms embargo on Bosnia, thereby violating its right to self-defense. The brutality of this war, with its ethnic cleansing, its systematic raping of women, and its deliberate targeting of children, have sickened and shocked us. Many of us from the beginning have joined our colleagues in urging an end to the embargo and of using our air power more effectively. At times, the methods we advocated varied; for instance, many of us agreed with the President that it would have been a terrible mistake to end the embargo unilaterally in defiance of the United Nations, while others of us thought that we should have ended it long ago despite the damage it might have done to our relations with our allies.

The goal that Senators hoped to reach by lifting the embargo and using air power has been reached--the parties to the conflict have all sued for peace. The main obstacle up to this point has been Serbia and the Serbian militias in Bosnia. Until they thought that settling the war would be to their advantage, no peace had a chance of lasting. Serbians now believe settling this conflict is in their interests for three main reasons. First, the economic sanctions the world has imposed on Serbia have worn it down. After years of increasing hardship, Serbians have no more stomach for continued fighting. Second, the new alliance between two of the factions--the Moslems and the Croats--has led to battlefield success for them against the Serbians. Third, the extensive bombing campaign of recent days against Serbian military targets has shown the Serbians that the world is no longer willing to put up with its adventurism. If it does not stop now, it will suffer military defeat. Senators should not become so consumed by their advocacy of a certain process--arming the Bosnians and using air strikes--that they fail to see that the reason for advocating that process--to achieve parity, and thus stability, between the sides, and thus make them willing to negotiate--has been achieved. Certainly many of us think that this result would have been achieved much more quickly, with much less bloodshed and inhumanity, if our preferred process of lift-and-strike had been followed, but that is now all water under the bridge. The Clinton Administration policy has worked.

Even when we were advocating a lift-and-strike policy we knew that when a peace agreement was finally brokered outside forces would have to be sent to Bosnia to monitor the restoration of civil society. Neutral third-parties are going to have to stand between the factions as they disarm and rebuild, because without a third-party presence no side will dare to trust the other. The United States, as the world's only super power, and because of the democratic values it represents, has an obligation to be a part of those forces.

The Dayton accords are far more than a truce; they set forth a blueprint for Bosnia's future. Power will be democratically shared between the different ethnic groups. The warring parties have agreed to a military build-down, and the arms embargo on Bosnia which created the inequities that caused the war will be lifted. The United States will make certain, within the next year, that the Bosnian Government has the means it needs to defend itself against any future attack. Additionally, it is also important to note that Bosnia will remain one country, without losing any territory. Other parts of the agreement include that refugees will be allowed to return to their homes and that war criminals will be turned over to the war crimes tribunal.

The Clinton Administration has assured us repeatedly that the United States' role in this process will be strictly a military role. It will not be engaged in nation-building, nor will it pick sides in disputes as they arise in this transition process. U.S. troops will not be in Bosnia to rebuild it, but to make it possible for the Bosnians of all ethnic groups to rebuild it themselves.

This mission will still be extremely dangerous. The hatreds that have been in Bosnia for hundreds of years will still be there next year and for the foreseeable future. The barbarity of the recent conflict will make it difficult for many individuals to stop fighting, and Americans will be targets at time. Further, there are 6 million landmines in Bosnia, half of them in the area that the Americans will patrol, so there will probably be many casualties that are unintended. We are committed to doing everything we can to protect the safety of our troops who will be sent. They will not be lightly armed peacekeepers, and they will have robust rules of engagement. In Haiti, we have followed this policy and the results have been encouraging. U.S. forces have been attacked only once in that country, and the overwhelming, instantaneous response by our forces has discouraged any further attacks. Further, if the situation

changes, and it is apparent that the sides are no longer committed to peace, then the Administration has made it clear that our forces will be withdrawn--we are not going to fight to enforce a peace that is not wanted.

The resolution before us expresses opposition to the mission but support for our troops. This resolution is dangerous. If Senators believe that we should stop this mission than they should have voted for the previous resolution that would have blocked all funding. That resolution failed, though, so the United States now needs to speak with one voice. Twenty thousand American servicemen will soon be on the ground in one of the most volatile regions of the world. They need encouragement and support. We remember the words from the Bible, "For if the sound of the trumpet be uncertain, who will follow into battle?" By refusing to cut off funding on the last vote, the decision was made. Senators must unite around that decision instead of bickering and second-guessing it.

If we fail to unite behind this mission now we will also encourage those elements in Bosnia that hope to see the Dayton accords fail. If they see disunity in America, they may feel that making a few attacks against our forces will be enough to make us withdraw. America's resolve was tested and found wanting in Vietnam, not on the battlefield, but domestically, and most critically in Congress. When American troops are sent into battle they should be sent to succeed. They should never become pawns in political games. Whether Senators would have sent troops to Bosnia or not is no longer relevant--they are going, and if they support our troops they must support the mission as well.

For us, the decision is not even close. The conflict in Bosnia could easily spread beyond Bosnia's borders and throughout Europe. In the very near term, it could lead to open warfare between two NATO allies, Greece and Turkey. It could also easily strengthen dictatorial forces in Russia that are sympathetic to Serbia. American leadership would also be severely weakened if the United States were to back out of the leadership role which it should so clearly exercise in this matter. Finally, the opportunity to stop the genocidal practice of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia cannot be passed. Since World War II and the extermination of the European Jews, a common refrain has been "never again." That refrain has been ringing hollow the past several years as the world has done little to stop the slaughter in Bosnia.

We think that President Clinton made the right decision in committing ground forces. The mission may not succeed, but now that the Serbians, Croatians, and Moslems are ready for lasting peace, the United States has a duty to try to help them achieve it. We support our troops, we support this mission, and we therefore strongly oppose the Inhofe/Hutchison/Nickles resolution.

Argument 2:

President Clinton should not have sent ground troops to Bosnia. The arguments of the supporters of this resolution are right on that score. Many of us, in fact, believe he violated the Constitution in committing forces when he knew full well that he did not have the support of Congress for that commitment. However, those Senators who are in general agreement with the policy of sending troops to Bosnia are correct in their argument that once a decision to use force is made it is our duty to the Nation, and especially to our troops, to rally behind that decision. We may have our reservations, but no one may doubt our resolve to succeed. Accordingly, we urge the rejection of this resolution.